

## “WHERE ARE THE NINE?” WHERE? NO. 2960

A SERMON  
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*“And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”  
Luke 17:17*

THE whole narrative connected with the text is worthy of your careful reading. There were ten men, lepers who, according to the old proverb that “birds of a feather flock together,” had made a company, and seemed to have lived in greater amity through kinship of suffering than they would have done had they been healthy and competent to share the fragrance of each other’s joys.

Mutual woe may have softened some of their natural jealousies, for we find that there was at least one in the company who was a Samaritan, while the others were Jews. Now, “the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans,” yet, when both are placed beyond the pale of society—in their sickness an intimacy springs up between them. So does common calamity bring about strange friendships. These men, who, under any other circumstances, would have been mortal enemies, became comfortable companions—at least, so far as their disease would allow them the thought of comfort.

Do you not observe everywhere how sinners congregate together? Drunkards are gregarious creatures—they will not often drink alone. The lascivious song is hardly sweet unless it thrills from many tongues. In most sorts of merry-making that are not wise, we know that it is company that gives the zest and yields the main gratification. Men seem to have a sort of anticipation of the time when they shall be bound up in bundles—they gaily forestall their gloomy doom, as they bind themselves up in bundles while they are yet living.

Oh, that Christians would adhere as closely to one another as sinners do, that they would forget their differences, whether they be Jews or Samaritans, and walk in friendship and love! If common sickness made the lepers a band, how much more should common mercy bind us to one another!

Well, it so happened that all these ten lepers agreed to go to Christ, the great Healer, at one time. Oh, what a mercy it is when a whole hospital full of sinners will agree to go to Christ at once! I recollect—I can never look back but with pleasure upon the time when a whole company of friends, who were simply worldly, irreligious people, and were accustomed to meet together constantly, were all moved with a desire to come up to the house of God, and it pleased God to so direct the shot that the most of them were brought under the divine power.

Some of them, who are sitting here, now, will recollect right well when they used to issue invitations for their convivial parties on Sunday evenings. But now they are with us, and are some of the most useful and vigorous church members that we have. It is a fine thing when the ten lepers all agree to come together—it will be a grander thing when the ten lepers are all healed and not one left to mourn that he has been neglected.

These lepers become an example to us, for they went to Jesus. Their disease was foul and loathsome. They felt it to be so. Their own society could not beguile them—they wanted health, and nothing else but perfect health would content them.

How did they go to Jesus? They first of all went directly, for it is written in the narrative that, as Christ entered into a village, these lepers began to cry out. They did not wait until He got into the nearest house, and had sat down and taken some refreshment. Nay, but they meet Him at the village gates. They waylay Him at the very portals. They cannot stop—no delay, no procrastination for them.

O leprous sinner, go to Christ at once. Go now, tarry not until you have left the sanctuary! Wait not until the sermon is over. It is written, "To-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Young man, at the threshold of your life, seek Christ. Go now, you who have begun to be sick. Go now, young woman, now that your cheek begins to be blanched with consumption, go now, go at once, go instantly to meet the healing Savior.

They went humbly. They stood afar off—note that. They felt that they had no right to come near. So, must we go to our Lord for mercy—conscious that we have no claim upon Him, and standing, just as the publican did, afar off, scarcely daring to lift our eyes to heaven, we must cry—"God be merciful to me a sinner."

William Dawson once told this story to illustrate how humble the soul must be before it can find peace. He said that at a revival meeting, a little lad, who was used to Methodist ways—I do not tell the story for the sake of Methodism, but for the sake of the moral—the little boy went home to his mother and said, "Mother, John So-and-so is under conviction and is seeking for peace, but he will not find it tonight, mother." "Why, William?" said she. "Because he is only down on one knee, mother, and he will never get peace until he is down on both knees."

Now the moral of that story, using it metaphorically, is true. Until conviction of sin brings us down on both knees—until we are completely humbled, until we have no hope, no merit, no proud boasting left—we cannot find the Savior. And willing must we be, not to embrace Him like sanctified Mary, but to stand at a distance like the unclean lepers.

Observe how earnestly they sought Him. They cried with a loud voice, or rather, "They lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They emulated one another. One cried with all his might, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." And another seemed to say, "That is not loud enough," and so he shouted, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." And so each one strained his voice that he might reach the ear of the Savior.

There is no winning mercy without holy violence. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." You recollect that blind man, who was sitting on the bank, one day, when Jesus went by, and as he heard a great noise of a mob passing along, he said, "What means this?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by."

The man, with quick perception, perceived that here was an opportunity for him, so he shouted with all his might, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Now, Christ was in the middle of a sermon, and some of the apostles—as some of our good deacons might do when there was a little disturbance—slipped out of the crowd to say, "Hush, don't make that noise. You will disturb the Preacher."

But he cried, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." "Hold your tongue. The Master cannot attend to you." And other zealous friends gathered round and would have put him out of the way, but he cried the more a great deal, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

Well, now, it is just thus that we must pray if we would get the mercy. Cold prayers court refusal. Heaven is not to be obtained by lukewarm supplications. Heat your prayers red-hot, brother. Plead the blood of Jesus. Plead like one who means to prevail—and then you shall prevail.

Not to tarry where there is plenty of room for long observations, let me turn your attention to the way in which Christ cured these ten lepers.

There is a singular variety in Christ's methods of cure. Sometimes, it is a touch. Another time, clay and spittle. At other times, a word. This time, He said to them, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." They were not clean, and they might, therefore, have turned round and said, "What a foolish errand! Why should we go and exhibit our filthiness to priests? Master, will You either cure us or not? If You will cure us, we can then go to the priests. If You will not, it is a vain errand to go to the priests to be again doomed to seclusion."

They did not ask questions, however. They were too wise for that. They did just what they were told. And though they were white, and far from being like men whose flesh is sound, the whole ten set off on

their pilgrimage to go to the priests. And as they went, suddenly the cure was wrought, and they were every one of them clean. Oh, what a beautiful picture is this of the plan of salvation!

Jesus Christ says, “Believe on me, and live.” Oh, be not foolish. Do not say, “But Lord, make me whole and then I will believe.” Do not say, “Lord, give me a tender heart and then I will come.” “Lord, forgive my sin and then I will love You.” But do as He bids you.

He bids you trust Him, so, do as He bids you—trust Him. And while you are trusting Him—while you are going to Him with the white leprosy still in your skin, while you are yet upon the way—He will heal you. You know that we are not to be saved, first, and to believe in Christ afterwards—that may be the order of God’s covenant revelation, but it is not the order of our spiritual apprehension. We are to believe first, just as we are.

*“All unholiness and uncleanness,  
Being nothing else but sin,”—*

I am to believe that Jesus Christ is able to save me. I am to trust my soul with Him, that He may save it. And in the act of so doing I shall find salvation. Be not, I pray you, so foolish as to say, “Lord, I object to this method of procedure.” Seek no needless preparation. Do not hesitate and stop until you feel ready to come to Him.

*“Let not conscience make you linger,  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness He requireth  
Is to feel your need of Him:  
This He gives you;  
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.”*

Let us now fix our attention more closely on the text. I think I see those ten men—they are trudging along the road and as they go they are obliged to wear a veil and to cry, as they march along—“Unclean, unclean, unclean,” so as to warn the passers-by that lepers are on the road. Suddenly, while they are marching on, one of them turns to his fellow sufferer, and says, “I am clean.” And the next says, “So am I.” And the whole ten turn round, and look at one another, and each man, as he looks first at his own flesh and then at his fellows’, comes to the conclusion that the whole ten have been healed in an instant.

“What shall we do?” says one of them. “Why,” say the others, “we had better go on to the priests and get officially cleansed as soon as possible.” “I have a farm,” says one, “I have been a long while away from it and I should like to get back.” “Ah!” says another, “and I have not seen my wife for many a day. Let me be off to the priest and then go home to her.” “Ah!” says another, “there are my dear little children—I hope soon to take them on my knee.” “Yes,” says another, “and I want to join my old friends—to get back to my former companions.”

But there is another who says, “You don’t mean to say you will go on, do you? I think we ought to go back and thank the man that has made us whole. This is God’s work, and if we are to go and thank God in the temple, I think we ought first to go and thank God in the man who has done us this benefit, the man Christ Jesus. Let us go back to Him.”

“Oh!” says another, “I think we had better not. If we don’t go to the priest at once, our friends will not know us again and it will be a disgrace to us, in later years, if they say, ‘That is John the leper. That is Samuel the leper.’ I think we had better go to the priest at once, get the thing done and then get back as soon as we can. Let us see, you go to Bethsaida and you go to Capernaum. Let us get back as quietly as possible and hold our tongues about it, that, is our policy.”

“What!” says the other man—and he was a Samaritan—“What! Do that? Never has such love been heard of as that which has been shown to us, and such a gift as we have received ought to meet with

something like gratitude. If you will not go back, I will," says he. And they turn round, perhaps, and laugh at him for his over-zeal, and one of them says, "Our Samaritan friend always was fanatical."

"Fanatical or not," says he, "I have received such a favor that I never could repay it, even if I counted out my life's blood in drops, and therefore I will go back to Him and fall at His feet, and adore Him as God, seeing he has worked a divine work in me." Away he goes, down he falls at Jesus' feet, adores Him as God, and with as loud a voice as once he cried, "Lord, have mercy on me," he cries now, "Glory, glory, glory be unto Your name." Jesus answers, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

I am going to use the Savior's question, with that picture before you, and I hope we may give a satisfactory account of the nine. Gratitude is a very rare thing. If any of you try to do good for the sake of getting gratitude, you will find it one of the most profitless trades in the world. If you can do good, expecting to be abused for it, you will get your reward, but if you do good with an expectation of gratitude in return, you will be bitterly disappointed.

If anybody is grateful for anything you do, be surprised at it, for it is the way of the world to generally be ungrateful. The more you do, the more you may do, and when you have done your best, your friend will forget it. *Alas! that this should be true, in a spiritual sense, with regard to Christians.* I shall take that class first.

How many are there in this house of God whose sins have been forgiven? They owe to Christ a healing far more wonderful than that of being cleansed from leprosy. The Lord has made them clean—they are saved from death and hell. But of the saved people in the world, how many there are who never make even an open profession of their being saved at all! A few there are who come—shall I say only one out of ten? They are baptized, we give them the right hand of fellowship, we thank God—this is well, "but where are the nine?" "Where are the nine?"

Every now and then, a brother who has been made a partaker of sovereign grace comes forward and says, "I am on the Lord's side." Bless God for that. But are there not many who are hiding themselves, like Saul, among the stuff? "Where are the nine?" Walk through the streets, traverse this great city of London—are we to believe that there is no more Christianity in London then that which is apparent in our congregations?

I cannot think so. I hope that there are multitudes of true Christians who never did come out and say, "I am a follower of the Lamb." But is this right? "Where are the nine?" Are they where they are doing good? Are they not in the coward's place? Are they not skulking like deserters? "Where are the nine?" How it is that *they* bring no glory to God? Purchased with Christ's blood, why do they not acknowledge that they are His? Being one with Him secretly, why do they not become one with Him publicly? He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." O, you nine, where are you?

But *out of those who do make a profession*, to come closer home to most of you, *how few there are that live up to it!* The profession is made and they call themselves the people of God. And there are some Christians—especially some in the humbler walks of life—whose daily walk is the best sermon upon religion that can possibly be preached.

With what satisfaction have I often looked upon many a poor girl struggling hard to earn her daily bread with her needle, but adorning the doctrine of God more even than a bishop on the bench! And how have I seen some of you in other ranks, too, and marked your consistency of life, the incorruptibility of your honesty—how you will stand out against temptations, and are neither to be moved by bribes, nor to be subdued by threats.

Now this is true of many Christians. You will meet with them every now and then—men who are like pillars of light, as the saintly Basil desired to be—men who reflect the image of Christ. As soon as you see them, you have no need to ask, "Whose image and superscription is this?" They live like Jesus. Their holiness, their loving spirit, their prayerfulness, their gentleness, all betoken that they are like the Savior. Ah! this is true of some—"but where are the nine?" "Where are the nine?"

That shop-counter can tell where some of them are—cheating the public. "Where are the nine?" Some of them inconsistent in their walk—worldly with the worldly, frothy with the light and trifling, as giddy and as fond of carnal pleasure as anybody. "Where are the nine?" O brethren, if all who profess to be God's people really lived up to what they profess, what a grand world this would be!

How changed would trade would become! How different your merchandise and your traffic! How altered the appearance of everything. How blessed the poor, how happy the rich! Where would be your pride? Where your aping of high gentility? Where your longing after so much creature-respect and earthly grandeur? The whole thing would be done away with if we became like Christ. In the case of some few, they are delivered from this present evil world according to the will of God. "But where are the nine?" "Where are the nine?" Let their conscience answer.

And in our churches, too, *how few there are who, making a profession of religion, are fervent in it!* If you want good people, who go regularly to church or chapel, subscribe a little sometimes—do not mind walking through the Sunday school once in a year, feel a good deal for the poor and needy, only do not feel in their pockets. If you want good people who wish all sorts of good things, but never do them—I can find them as readily as I can find birds' nests in winter time, when the leaves are stripped off the trees.

But if you want those who give body, and soul, and strength to God's cause—if you would have women who can break the alabaster box of precious ointment for Jesus, as Mary did—if you would have those that love much, because much has been forgiven, I hardly think you will find one in ten. And very likely that one in ten will be a Samaritan—one who, in her former state, was full of sin, or a man who, before his conversion, was one of the vilest of the vile. You will often find pure and perfect love there when you may not find it anywhere else.

I thank God that in this congregation there are many who consistently and cheerfully give up their substance to the Lord—one in ten—"but where are the nine?" I thank God that in this congregation there are many earnest workers, so that the Sunday schools in the neighborhood are mainly supplied with our congregation. This is good, but "where are the nine?"

I thank God for those men who stand in the street and preach, and for those brothers and sisters who distribute tracts, or in other ways seek to serve their Master. This is noble of you—but how many do it? "Where are the nine?" Summon the church members, march them all along, and let the officer's eye run down the ranks and he will say, "Yes, there is one there who serves his Master well. Stand out. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—you may go on."

Here comes another—"Yes, this man *does* live for the cause of Christ. You can stand out, too. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—you may go on—you do nothing at all." I am afraid the average is even less in some churches, and I might, if I were addressing some congregations, not only say, "Where are the nine?" but "Where are the ninety-nine?" For ninety-nine out of a hundred among *some* professors do not live to God with zeal, with fire, with earnestness, and with fervor.

Nay, my brethren, when you fetch out such men as Brainerd, when you bring into the front ranks such men as Henry Martyn, such evangelists as Whitefield and Wesley, such toilsome missionaries of the cross as Robert Moffat or John Williams, you may say, after you have looked at them, "Yes, these do well. They owe much to God and they live as if they felt it." but where are the ninety-nine? Where are the nine hundred and ninety-nine? *We* all owe as much as they, but oh, how little we do! The ground has been ploughed as much, watered as much, and sown as well, but we do not bring forth twenty-fold, while they bring forth a hundred.

"Where are the nine?" Come now, I should not like to leave this point until I have found out some of the nine. Are there not some of my own church members who are doing just nothing? You do not help the Sunday school. We require a number of young men and women to go to Kent Street Ragged-schools to teach on Sabbath-days, and that is one reason why I want to find out where the nine are. There is a noble field of labor amidst the poverty and degradation of Kent Street, and I think we, as a church, ought to look after that locality.

"Where *are* the nine?" Am I not addressing some who are doing nothing for Christ? When brethren now and then say to me, "Well, sir, what *shall* we do?" I usually suspect that they are rather lazy, for an industrious person soon finds plenty to do in such a city as this. But if there are any of the nine present, let me call them out. For your own comfort's sake, for the world's sake, for Christ's sake, for your souls' sake, because men are dying, time is flying, eternity is hastening, come, I pray you, come forth, you that are of the nine.

One feels, sometimes, in prospect of death, like the venerable Bede, who, when he had nearly translated the Gospel of John, said to the young man who was writing from his dictation, "Write fast, write fast, for I am dying. How far are you now? How many verses remain?" "So many." "Quicker, quicker," said he, "write more quickly, for I am dying." When at length he said, "I have come to the last verse," the good old man folded his arms, sang the Doxology, and fell asleep in Jesus.

Quickly, brother, quickly, you will never get through the chapter if you do not work and write quickly. Quickly, quickly, your time of dying is so near, and then, when you have done, if you have worked quickly for Christ, though it is not of debt but of grace, you will be able to say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," and with the Doxology on your quivering lip you will go to sing the Doxology in sweeter strains above.

Having thus somewhat roughly handled professors of religion, I am going to address *those who have received special favors from God*. Like the ten lepers, there are many in the world who have had very special favors. How many are present tonight who have had fever, cholera, or some sickness which appeared to be unto death! I bless God that, when I was last sitting to see inquirers, a very considerable number traced their conversion to sickbeds. They were there aroused and they afterwards came up to God's house,—

*"To pay the vows  
Their souls in anguish made."*

Yes, those are the ones typified by the Samaritan. "but where are the nine?" Is there not one of them under the gallery there, to the right hand, he who was nearly drowned at sea, and just then, oh, how he vowed that, if God would spare him, he would live to God's service? But he is one of the nine.

Have I not another yonder, who was given up by the doctors, and like Hezekiah, turned his face to the wall and said, "Lord, only let me live, and I will be a different man"? But if there is any difference, he has been rather worse than better. There is another of the nine. I need not go out to find the other seven—they are all here.

They have some of them been sick, some of them have suffered from some accident, some have undergone operations, some have passed through imminent peril both on land and sea, and some have had their lives preserved—I think I see them now—to a very advanced period of life. "Where are the nine?"

There is one of the nine here—he has passed his threescore years and ten, and while some of his age have been brought to know the Lord by reason of His goodness and kindness in thus lengthening their span, he still remains, and does not give glory to God. O souls, to lie to God is to lie with a vengeance—to promise Him and to not perform. What! Is God to be played with? Will you play fast and loose with Him?

Dare you befool yourself with the Most High, and promise Him this and that, and then break your vow? In the name of God, you nine, I cite you to make your appearance at the last great bar, except you now turn from the error of your ways. May the Spirit of God turn you, for otherwise, when the question is asked, "Where are the nine?" you must be dragged forward, and your vows, and bonds, and privileges shall be all urged against you and shall be swift witnesses against you forever.

"Where are the nine? "I may remind you of the *common mercies that we all of us enjoy*. Fed each day by divine bounty, clothed by heaven's charity, supplied with breath by God, there are some who live

to praise Him, some who give back that breath in praise which God prolongs in mercy, who spend that life to His honor which His long-suffering permits to last. But these are but one in ten, shall I say one in ten thousand? "Where are the nine?"

Here are some of them—men who live *upon* God, but never live *to* God. Men who go from morning to night without prayer—who roll out of bed in the morning and get to their labor—and roll into it at night, and fall asleep again, but never utter, never feel a "God be thanked for this day's favor," never a breathing of the heart towards the God who is in heaven. Like brutes they live, like brutes they will die. Only, unlike brutes, they will rise again and receive, for the deeds done in the body, the due reward of the evil that they have done. "Where are the nine?" Let the question provoke you to weep over your ingratitude and lead you to turn to God.

Then again, to use the question another way, *where are the nine who have listened to the Gospel?* Lately the Lord has been very gracious to our city. Our preachers have not been quite so dead and dull as they once were. The theatres have echoed with the name of Jesus. Men like Radcliffe, and North, with Richard Weaver, chief and foremost, and Mr. Denham Smith, have preached the Word with power, and from among the crowds who have gone in and out of the theatres, some have been converted to God—but "where are the nine?" "Where are the nine?"

And in this house, too, with its aisles and its seats thronged so constantly—how many thousands listen to our voice! Yes, I thank God, some not in vain, for some of all sorts, of every rank and condition, have believed in Jesus—but still, "where are the nine?" Christians, here is a solemn question for you. There is much good being done in London just now, but we question whether all the evangelical labor in London is carried on by so much as one in ten. Then, "where are the nine?"

When I was in some of the back streets in the neighborhood of Kent Street last week, I was very pleased, as I went along, to notice in one little house, "Cottage meetings held here." A little further on, a Ragged-school. A little further on, "A prayer meeting held here twice a week." I could hardly see a street, however low, that seemed to be without some traces of religious effort and action. You could not have stated this seven years ago.

I believe the signs of the time are favorable, but yet the effort put forth is not at all commensurate with the dire necessity of the age. You do much. The City Mission does much. Your tract-distributing, despite all that is said against it, does much. Your street-preaching does much more than critics will allow. I believe that there is more good being done by the preaching in the street than by the preaching within walls, with some few exceptions. Go on with what is being done, but multiply your agencies, for let this question goad you on, "What of the nine? What of the nine?"

O dear friends, if we could but hope that one in ten in this great city was converted, we might set the bells ringing far more merrily than when the Princess passed through the streets. But I fear we have not got to that. However, if we had, it would be a solemn question for us to ask, "What of the nine?" I am afraid some of that nine come here.

You are here tonight unconverted. O dear friends, do you recollect when you were young? There were ten of you—you are the only one left. What of the nine? They are all dead. As far as you know, they are all lost and you are the only one left. Oh, that God would make you His tonight!

Or it may be that you have been listening a long time to the Word of God, and you have seen one converted, and another converted, but there you are and your other companions still unblessed. Oh, that you, the nine, might be brought in! We must pray to God to convert the nine. We cannot let him go with the one—we must have the nine brought in. The day will come when Christ shall sit on the throne of His glory and there shall come up before Him the ones—and He shall say, "Come, you blessed"—but after He has done that, He may well say, "I gave breath to more than these. I sent the Gospel to more than these. I was merciful to more than these. Where are the nine?"

And then, you nine, you must make your appearance. And He will say to you, "I fed you, but you lived not to Me. I called you, but you would not come. I invited you, but you would not turn. And now, you nine, depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

But “hope” is the word for tonight, even for the nine. May God be pleased to give you hope within, while I utter hope without! Jesus died. His death is your life. Trust Him and you are saved. Rest on Him with your whole weight. Throw yourself flat upon Him—have nothing to do with standing in your own strength, but prostrate at the foot of His dear cross lay yourself down, and you shall not be numbered with the nine, but you shall return to give glory to God, even though hitherto you may have been a Samaritan, a stranger, the chief of sinners. May God add His blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

## EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

### ACTS 27:11-44

[This exposition belongs to sermon #2952, The Church The World’s Hope, but there was no space available for its publication there.]

Paul had advised the captain not to set sail for a while.

**Verses. 11-13.** *Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.*

He is very unwise who trusts the winds, and equally so is he who sets his confidence upon any earthly thing, for fickle as the wind that blows are all things beneath the moon.

**14-15.** *But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.*

You may have a calm at one moment and a storm at the next. And unless your protection is from above, and your confidence in something more stable than can be found in this world, woe betide you. Sometimes it is well to yield to the stress of circumstances. If you have struggled hard, and can do no more, it is well to leave the result with God.

**16-21.** *And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence—*

They had not the time or the heart to eat, and perhaps scarcely thought of doing so while they were in such imminent peril of their lives.

**21.** *Paul stood forth in the midst of them,*

A prisoner, but the freest man there. Despised, and yet the most honored among them. The bravest heart of all that company of soldiers and sailors.

**21-24.** *And said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.*

Oh, what a privilege it would be if God would say the same to us! If, in the night of trouble, when you are tossed to and fro, mother, father, the Lord should say to you, “Fear not, I have given you your whole family—they shall all be saved.” You would not mind how fiercely the storm might rage if you could be sure of that. And how happy would my heart be if all that sail in this big vessel were given to

me! I should not be satisfied even then—I should want a great many more than that—but still, what a blessed thing it would be to have every soul that sails with us saved!

**25-27.** *Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;*

They could hear the roar of the breakers.

**28.** *And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.*

They found that the water was shallowing very quickly, so they knew that they were getting near the shore.

**29.** *Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.*

Then they “wished for the day.” And how often the Christian throws his great anchor out and wishes for the day—waiting “till the day break and the shadows flee away.” Well, it will not be long. If night lasts through the whole of this life, the morning comes—the everlasting morning.

**30.** *And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,*

These cowardly sailors meant to get away and leave the prisoners and passengers and soldiers to perish.

**31.** *Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*

Yet God had said that they should be, so that it is quite consistent to believe in divine predestination and yet to see the utility, nay, the necessity, of the use of means. “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.”

**32.** *Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the skiff, and let her fall off.*

So that the sailors could not get away.

**33-34.** *And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.*

What a grand speech this is! It is the utterance of faith. Talk of eloquence! This is real eloquence—for Paul to be addressing the people in a storm-tossed ship as calmly as if he were safely on shore.

**35.** *And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.*

He would not eat without giving thanks to God. There are some who do, even as the swine do, but the Christian finds it good at all times, before he eats, to bless the God that gave the food to him. It is a Christian habit which should not be given up. Paul gave thanks when it was most inconvenient to do so—when a great storm was raging and when there were only two or three on board who sympathized with him.

**36.** *Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.*

Courage is contagious, as well as timidity. The holy bravery of one good man may make many others brave.

**37-39.** *And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.*

They wanted to let her go ashore and break up, and so save their lives.

**40-42.** *And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained*

*unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.*

The soldiers were responsible for them. It would be required at their hands if a prisoner escaped, so, with that cruelty, and yet that obedience to law which was characteristic of the Roman legions, “the soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.”

**43-44.** *But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.*

So God had said, “and so it came to pass.”

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